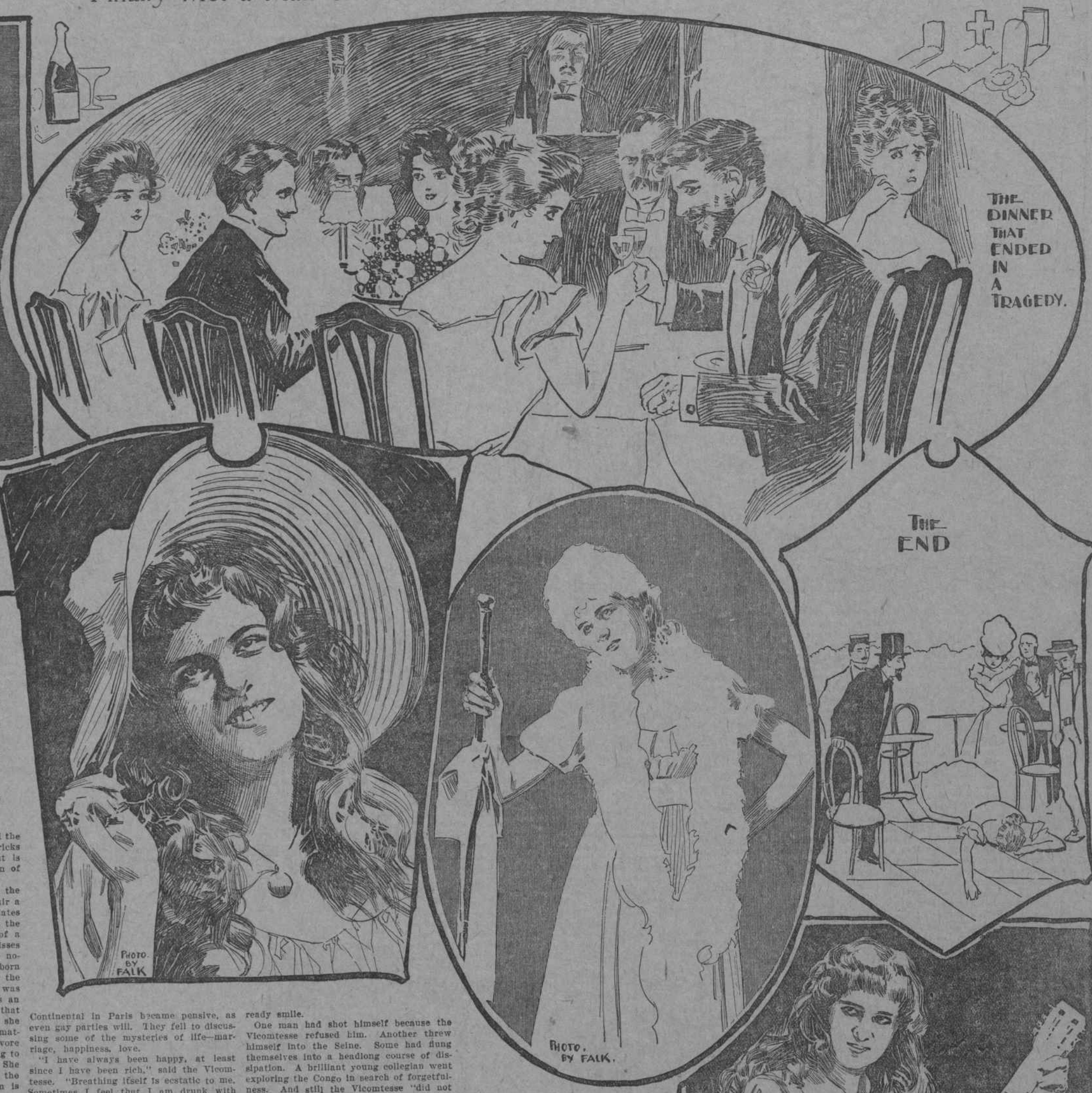
A HEART-BREAKER WHO DIED OF A BROKEN HEART HERSELF.

The Sad, True Story of the Career of Vesta Hastings, Who Leaped to Death from a Window in Paris Because She Finally Met a Man She Couldn't Charm.



A FASCINATING young woman of fashion, some wealth and a title died in Paris last week. In the midst of a gay dinner party she arose from the table in tears, rushed to an open window and flung herself to the pavement. She was an American girl.

She killed herself because she learned too late that she had a heart—she who had broken so many hearts.

She had always denied that she had a heart. When other women talked of their loves and hatreds, their joys and griefs, she laughed.

"Mon dieu!" she cried. I have none of these, for I have no heart and am happy."

She lived, as butterflies live, in the sunshine. No one ever saw her weep. Life for her, was a mad, merry chase of the phantom pleasure. It was a dance of the will-o'-the-wisp, a waltz song with tempo ever accelerated.

But the night and the cold came without warning. They found the butterfly's wings broken, her colors paled.

THE woman's title was Viscomtesse De Henriot, her name Vesta Dore Hastings. She threw herself from a fourth story window of Maxim's, the Delmonico's of Paris, because the man she loved had no love for her. Her heart had at last awakened, and the awakening was pain.

It was terrible, the breaking of a heart that had just sprung into life.

"You may recover from your injuries, madam, if you but aid me by your will," said her physician.

"Ah, but, doctor, I have no wish to live! Life is too hard for those who have hearts!"

And the doctor says that she died from sheer perversity, this beautiful woman, who had broken so many hearts and whose own heart at last was broken.

She lingered four days after the leap from the bright, flower-scented banqueting hall to the broad sidewalk below, where men and women were gossiping and drinking sweetened water. She wept often in the last days. She said some bitter things, but the hearers said they were true, every one.

"Love is only another name for pain."

"If you would be happy, be loved. If you would be wretched, love."

"When you open your heart to love you are opening it to its twin sister, which is misery."

"It is not for women to love, for love to them means suffering. To men it is the flush and joy of conquest."

"If a man is indifferent to you you are mad for him. If he loves you you scorn him. Such is the mystery called woman."

"The greatest good that can come to a woman is to be born without a heart."

"After all, what is a heart? It is capacity for suffering."

"The man or woman who breaks a heart is a murderer. It is far kinder to kill the body than torture the spirit."

"I believe the sin beyond redemption is to break the heart that loves you. Neither God nor man nor the devil could conceive anything more cruel."

There were other women of fashion like herself and a few men about her bed at the last. It was strange, this, for men and women of the gayest of cities flee from sight of death as Mephistopheles from the sound of church chimes, but the Vicomtesse de Henriot had been the gayest of them all. They had not thought she could be so gloomy even in death. Besides, they all loved her in their way.

The women wept until there were little furrows in the rouge on their cheeks. The men fiercely twisted their mustaches. They drew the curtains of silk, rich as the heart of a rose, about her bed and left her there.

It was in the midafternoon glory of a September day. The man for whom the Vicomtesse de Henriot died was driving in the Bois du Bologne. No one had dared to ask him to be at her bedside when the shadow fell.

She had loved him. He had not loved her. He was proud of both facts, in a supercilious fashion of his own, for had not the Vicomtesse broken many hearts, but never loved until she met him?

He was toasted in the cafes as Adonis, Apollo, Narcissus. He smoked and smiled, but said not a word. He was not seen at the funeral.

Vesta Dore Hastings was poor and ambitious. Being merely a woman, she had but little chance for advancement except through the aid of men, and early Vesta Dore Hastings learned that men aid most when they are most allured.

She was very young when she learned the fine art of allurement, the fetching tricks of the eyes, the smile that woos but is not overmirthful, the pretty affectation of dependence and trustfulness.

In Portland, by the Pacific, where the warm moisture of the air gives the hair a curling softness, and, winelike, stimulates and yet soothes, until the carriage has the grace of a fawn and the indolence of a voluptuary; where the soft sunshine kisses fair cheeks to a peach-pink hue seen nowhere else, Vesta Dore Hastings was born and reared. She was beautiful, after the fashion of the nut-brown maid. She was above the medium height. There was an untaught grace about every movement that would have been called queenly had she not been a poor man's daughter. No matter how simple her clothes, she "wore them well," a phrase as full of meaning to her own sex as mystery to the other. She had developed to an unusual degree the gift of fascination which in a woman is only an intensified womanliness.

Her friends and neighbors regarded it as a rare piece of good fortune when Miss Hastings attracted the admiring attention of, and finally married, the travelling Vicomte De Henriot, described by them as a Russian-French noble. Miss Hastings agreed with them as to her good fortune.

That she did not love her husband was a matter of no moment. That after a few years she secured a divorce from him was a mere incident. By the divorce she secured alimony, which enabled her to indulge her passion for beautiful externals, the rustle of silks, the caress of laces, the dewy splendor of gems, and for her horizon the tapestry of luxurious rooms, for her path in life the velvet of priceless carpets.

She did not care that the Vicomte De Henriot had been an unkind, even a brutal husband. She was indifferent to the acts of those for whom she did not care and the Vicomtesse De Henriot cared for to one on the planet but her own beautiful, vain, sweet-tempered self.

She lived in San Francisco for a time. There she met and enslaved John Bradbury, the young Los Angeles millionaire, he with the leaven of Indian blood in his veins, who afterward married, and whose wife's elopement caused an international scandal. The poor girl from Portland had many millions almost within her grasp as well as the title she had acquired. But the wisest sometimes overreach themselves in their struggle for the social heights upon which the Vicomtesse De Henriot had set her beautiful eyes. She coquetted, while young Bradbury was in Los Angeles, with E. J., or "Lucky," Baldwin, a prince of Pacific coast turfmen, and others, and this so angered young Bradbury that he broke the engagement.

In Washington she was much admired by Senators grave and Congressmen gay. In New York she had many a slave and suitor, a young man who is a member of one of the leading dry goods firms of this city being among the number. She had a score of adorers in Paris, but she would marry none of them.

"I am a patriot," she often said with laughter. "I love independence as much as did those other patriots who signed the famous declaration. Why should I marry? I have money, a title, leisure. What more could marriage bring me?"

She had a brief stage career. As a French woman in costume at a bal masque; as a street player and a flower girl she played minor roles in the Herald Square Theatre, this city, and the Baldwin Theatre, San Francisco.

One evening a gay party at the Hotel Continental in Paris became pensive, as even gay parties will. They fell to discussing some of the mysteries of life—marriage, happiness, love.

"I have always been happy, at least since I have been rich," said the Vicomtesse. "Breathing itself is ecstatic to me. Sometimes I feel that I am drunk with the joy of life. I do not understand how any one who lives can be sad. It is much simply to live."

"But marriage is often a failure," sighed a gray-eyed woman in a gown that looked as though made of a cloud, through which the sunshine gleamed.

"Oh, marriage is—the Vicomtesse tapped the gray-eyed woman's arm with her fan—"marriage is—nothing." The Vicomtesse was never philosophical, not till afterward.

"And love is the greatest illusion of all. It is a mirage, a nothing," said some one with gloomy brows.

"Love? I have never known it," said the Vicomtesse. "I have no heart and I am happy. Once I had an admirer who was angry because I would not marry him. 'You have broken my heart,' he said. 'You may break others, but remember my words—in time your own will be broken.' He looked so white and angry and seemed so sure of what he said that I was frightened. It was the only time I have ever been frightened, although my good husband, the Vicomte, was not a sweet-tempered man, and I have seen him in some terrible moods. I was sixteen when the boy-sweetheart flung that prophecy at me. I am—hush! let it be a secret—thirty-six now. Will it yet be fulfilled, do you think?" The Vicomtesse's teeth gleamed in her ready smile.

One man had shot himself because the Vicomtesse refused him. Another threw himself into the Seine. Some had flung themselves into a headlong course of dissipation. A brilliant young collegian went exploring the Congo in search of forgetfulness. And still the Vicomtesse "did not understand."

One night she met a French scholar at a reception. She had taken a languid interest in his books and in newspaper accounts of his researches. She had wondered vaguely about the personality of a man so much talked about and then she had forgotten him until the night of the reception.

He was presented to her. She admired his keen, dark eyes, his breadth of brow, his almost rough virility. She smiled softly and brought all her pliant, pretty arts to bear upon him. He affected to be looking and listening, but so far as politeness permitted, he listened to the music and watched the passing fashionables. Plainly he was not even interested. She was beautiful, but there were many beautiful women. He was on the verge of boredom.

She was puzzled at first, pained later, and bitterly wounded at last. He bade her a cool "Good night" and left her with the tears very near the surface.

She slept but little and wept a great deal that night. She was pained by the eminent Frenchman's indifference, but she had no thought of blame for him. Vanity was forgotten. Her heart was awakening.

She met him again at another reception, again at a dinner and once again at a ball. Each time she spared none of her oft-successful arts, but the Frenchman scorned her. He was somewhat old-fashioned, a little of a theorist. He believed in the doctrine of elective affinities. He was certain this practiced coquette was not his affinity. He liked the violet type of womanhood. This woman was an assertive ripe red rose. He looked reproof at her from grave, cavernous eyes.

He sat next her at a dinner at Maxim's. The choice had been hers, not his. He was as cold as courtesy would permit. She was stung to the quick at last. His attitude was unmistakable. He despised her.

By her long residence among them she had come to be as impetuous as the Parisians themselves. She started from her chair. The Frenchman looked at her with cold curiosity. She burst into tears. She walked to the window and looked out. Laughter floated up from below. It seemed to her they were laughing at her, as he might be doing at this moment.

She sprang through the window while the diners had not yet risen to inquire whether she were ill. The next instant she lay on the sidewalk in her exquisite evening gown, bleeding and insensible, among the men and women sipping sweetened water.

She was taken to her apartments on the Rue Blanche, where, a week ago, she died. To the friends who watched beside her she said: "He was right, the boy sweetheart. My heart is broken."

ADA PATTERSON.

LOST SECRET OF EGYPTIAN EMBALMING FOUND.

ISTERSVILLE, W. Va., Sept. 8.—A plain and untaught farmer of Phillipi, Barbour County, John G. Hamrick by name, has discovered a process of embalming which is said to be as wonderful as that for which the ancient Egyptians were celebrated. His house is a museum of human curiosities embalmed by him, and is a great object of attraction to visitors. Mr. Hamrick has spent fifty years in that section, working his little farm during the Summer months and devoting his Winters to study and researches in the mysteries of ancient embalming.

Mr. Hamrick has on exhibition a magnificently preserved peacock, which was so lifelike as it stands on the pedestal that one momentarily expects to see it spread its wings and soar away. The collection of zoological specimens would excite the cupidity of any scientist. There are birds and queer animals and lots of snakes, and all are in a beautiful state of preservation.

A grewsome ornament on the mantelpiece in the best room of the house is a small negro baby, whose body was obtained from the poor farm some years ago and embalmed by Mr. Hamrick. The pickaninny looks so natural in the preserved state that one while looking at it almost expects to hear it cry out. In another room he has the bodies of two women who at one time were inmates of the asylum at Weston. The remains of the two women are lying on a slab side by side, clothed in shrouds, and but for the funeral surroundings a person looking at them would think they were asleep. The only change has been in the faces, which have become a little darker. The skin has not shrivelled and the hair and teeth are well preserved.

In speaking of his embalming discovery Mr. Hamrick stated that he had accidentally come upon it. He said: "I was interested in the work even when a boy, and at all leisure time would engage in the work. For a number of year with little result, as you will readily suppose. Finally, after experimenting with a new solution one day, I was agreeably surprised to observe during the next three or four days that the subject on which I had been experimenting did not wither and decay as had been the case formerly, and it was but a short time until I realized that a most important discovery had been made.

"Why have I not made my discovery public for the benefit of mankind? Well, to tell the truth, I have thought little of it in that way. It was principally for my own amusement that I have ever done any of the work at all, and as I am very well aware the world at large would not accept my discovery without bringing me into great prominence, and that I would be subject to a great deal of criticism of all kinds, both good and bad, I have naturally been backward about saying anything of it. Outside of the immediate neighborhood in which I live there are few people who know anything of it.

"I have experimented with all kinds of living things with my process, and have so far had but one failure, and that is with fish and their kindred associates of the water. So far I have utterly failed to preserve anything of this sort perfectly. But with all other members of the animal kingdom I have been perfectly successful, and at the present time have a large collection of various animals, birds, etc., which I have preserved, some of them having been in the house for a great number of years."

How It Feels to Fall from a Sky-Scraper.

JUST how it feels to fall from a sky-scraper has never been told until now.

The man who tells of it is Antonio Barton, who was pushed from the top of a column six stories high while at work on a building on Chestnut street, Philadelphia. As he fell he bumped against a loose plank, somewhat breaking his fall, and struck on a pile of sand in the street.

"It was my fourth accident in ten years of work on high buildings," Barton said, "and the most severe of all of them. Yet I call myself a lucky man, for we are always expecting accidents, and rather look for the death of at least one man in the construction of each great building.

"It was not a falling sensation, and only a slight sinking one, for it seemed as though while I was descending quite slowly the building was rising much more rapidly, yet not so rapidly that I could not observe and distinguish each passing floor.

"I thought of my home, the amount of wages due me, and wondered what my wife would say when I told her I had a fall, for the idea of being killed did not occur to me.

"As I passed the floor beneath the one from which I had fallen I plainly saw two acquaintances whom I recognized, and noticed that they were chiselling a piece of iron.

"At the next floor I noticed the look of astonishment on the face of a bricklayer as he held a brick in one hand and his trowel in the other, and gazed at me as I shot by. Though it was like a shot to him it was nothing of the sort to me. As I passed him, through association, I thought of a pile of bricks below and a heap of sand near it, yet which one should be my landing place didn't trouble me.

"Then came the first sensation of pain, when I struck the projecting end of a plank with my right shoulder. I knew I partially turned and saw a carpenter sitting on a window sill, looking the other way, and then the light appeared to be suddenly drawn from me, taking my senses with it.

"I know that my fall occupied less than three seconds, but my feelings and sensations apparently occupied a much longer time, and must have acted with greater rapidity than under normal conditions."